

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COL. WAYNE GRIGSBY, U.S. ARMY,  
3RD HEAVY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION, MULTINATIONAL DIVISION  
CENTER VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ TIME: 10:30 A.M. EDT DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 8,  
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CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, Office of the  
Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs): With us today for the Bloggers  
Roundtable is Colonel Wayne Grigsby, who is the commander, 3rd Heavy Brigade  
Combat Team, 3rd ID, MND-Central.

Sir, do you have an opening statement for us?

COL. GRIGSBY: Yes, sir.

And I can start with that opening statement, then do it like I always  
do, take some questions at the end, if that's okay.

MR. HOLT: That's what we're waiting for. That will work fine, sir.

COL. GRIGSBY: All right, sir. As you well know, I am Hammer 6,  
Colonel Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr., the commander of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat  
Team, 3rd Infantry Division, the Sledgehammer Brigade. And as you probably  
already know, we are the most deployed brigade in the United States Army, with  
about 41 months of deployment time since 2002 and now nearing the end of a 15-  
month deployment here in Iraq.

We deployed in March of '07 to the Madain qadha, just east of Baghdad,  
as the third of five surge brigades. Like much of the Multinational Division  
Center, we were attacked with interdicting accelerants as they moved or were  
moving toward Baghdad through our battlespace.

By stopping bad guys and bombs at the many pathways into Baghdad from  
the east, we intended on contributing to a reduction of violence, in Baghdad but  
also in the communities of the qadha that we have come to secure. I think if  
you look back on the past 15 months, you can see that we most definitely  
accomplished our purpose, of contributing to a reduction of violence, in  
Baghdad, and stabilizing the communities in the Madain qadha.

When we arrived, violent crime was out of control. Shopowners were  
extorted by criminal elements. And we were getting attacked not quite four to  
five times a day.

In our time here, murders have declined by greater than 50 percent, from 631 murders in 2006 down to 253 in 2007. Shopowners are selling their goods in revitalized markets. And we go through days where no one even dares to attack us.

We accomplished this by conducting aggressive, intel-driven offensive operations.

We wanted to bloody the nose of the extremists and make them fear us. We did and they now do.

We never forgot what a U.S. Army Heavy Brigade Combat Team was made to do: close with and destroy the enemy. We killed 160 enemy extremists, detained more than 500 suspected criminals -- 47 of which were high-value individuals on the division or brigade top 10 list -- and cleared every enemy sanctuary that existed prior to our arrival.

For instance, where al Qaeda and other Sunni extremist groups had had their run in the southern portion of our battlespace, now we estimate there are about three Sunni extremist groups of no more than 10 extremists per group in our battlespace. We killed or captured their leaders, denied them use of the safe houses and support zones, and with our Sons of Iraq allies, we are sitting on their former resupply lines and holding that terrain.

But beyond killing and capturing the enemy, we knew that we needed the good people of the Madain qadha to trust and respect us. While we were conducting 25 or more air assaults into enemy sanctuaries in the dead of night, we were building relationships with the townspeople that we lived with as neighbors in the major population centers. Since we worked out of patrol bases in the middle of the population centers, we never commuted to work. When a combat patrol began each day, Sledgehammer soldiers were already among their neighbors, living with them.

We built these relationships of trust by treating local residents with dignity and respect and giving them their community back. By taking extremists and criminals off the streets in Jisr Diyala, Wahida, Salman Pak and Nahrawan, we emboldened the good people to step back into the traditional roles of leadership: leadership by the tribal leader, leadership by the local government official rather than leadership by fear, where individuals used murder and intimidation to control the masses.

The major population centers of the qadha are now -- all now have revitalized markets, health care facilities, water distribution systems and schools. We facilitated the revitalization of the Salman Pak market, facilitated the refurbishing of the Madain hospital in Salman Pak and improved multiple water distribution facilities. Those are just a few examples.

One battalion alone, the 115 Infantry, oversaw refurbishment of more than 13 schools. In Wahida, we have had the opportunity to facilitate the construction of a brand-new soccer stadium. This is a luxury, but a luxury that we could assist in bringing to the community that has now lived through a relatively peaceful and normal year and is beginning to want more than the most basic elements in the hierarchy of needs.

To give you one more measure that the Iraqi government knows progress has been made in the Madain qadha, the government of Iraq spent about \$1 million in the Madain qadha in '07. In 2008, we have already committed millions of

dollars -- they have already committed millions of dollars worth of projects and improvement. It is not just me telling you things are better in Madain qadha. The leaders of Iraq are telling you things are better in the Madain qadha, putting their money in here as part of the Baghdad province.

In our time in the Madain, we have seen a significant reduction of violence. We have seen the economy spring back to life. We have seen the local government structure continue to mature and progress. We most definitely have momentum and we have made gains.

But with all (pauses ?) in Iraq, our hold on this momentum and these gains is tenuous, as you all know. To make these tenuous gains permanent, we will continue to hunt the enemy where he sleeps and we will continue to assist our Iraqi partners where they look to make improvements. We will continue to shake hands and build relationships during the daytime and at night we will kill or capture the extremists.

As I said earlier, we have been here for about 15 months, so we are scheduled to soon redeploy. We have a lot of work to accomplish before we depart. However, we are integrating another combat-tested brigade, Colonel Pat White's 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, the Iron Brigade, out of Germany into the Madain qadha.

As Pat and his team are coming on board, his team and mine are planning and preparing initiatives and programs that will vastly improve the quality of life in Jisr Diyala. One operation is called Operation Marne Dauntless. Just like any combat operation, we determine targets for this operation. The targets in this operation are a power substation, a water distribution facility, a youth center, four schools, multiple poultry farms, and more.

By working with our Iraqi partners to revitalize or refurbish these essential facilities and businesses, we hope to provide the people of Jisr Diyala and the Madain qadha another taste of what comes with living in a peaceful, law-abiding society. It is through this capacity-building effort that we can continue to pressure the enemy and leave him isolated outside the community that he used to use for protection and camouflage.

Things have gone well for the Hammer over the last 15 months. We have made gains and we do have momentum, but there is still a lot of work to be done. But with another great combat brigade coming into Madain qadha, I am very optimistic that Colonel Pat White and his team will continue to build on our progress over the coming months.

The Sledgehammer Brigade Combat Team is the Army's most deployed brigade in the Army, and our Sledgehammer soldiers can be proud that we are leaving this country in a far better condition than we arrived 15 months ago.

And I just appreciate you guys being here, and I will take your questions.

MR. HOLT: All right. Thank you very much.

Andrew, you were first on line, so why don't you get us started.

Q Colonel, Andrew Lubin from Military Observer. Good to talk to you again, sir.

COL. GRIGSBY: Good to see you again. I remember you a couple of times ago. Q Exactly. Sir, what we hear more about in the States now isn't the Sunnis, it's more the Shi'a warlords, gangsters, criminals, bad guys. Are you running -- yeah, the JAM offshoots. Are you running into them?

I guess the second part of question is, how's Ken Adgie doing down there in Arab Jabour?

COL. GRIGSBY: Oh, Ken's doing real well. As you know, as I told you last time, he used to -- he worked for me when we were in the 1st Infantry Division. He's doing great. And because he's right across the river, we work hand in hand with them.

But in the Madain qadha, before we got here it was Sunni extremists, Shi'a extremists and Persian influence. They were basically doing what they want to do. And like I said before, they no longer can do that.

And so the threat in here is still some Sunni extremists. I think we've said about three groups of about 10. There are some Shi'a extremists that are in here, and we still see periodically some Persian influence, with the rockets caches that we find and also with some RPG warheads that we have found.

Now as far as the JAM is concerned, the JAM that is abiding by the Muqtada al-Sadr cease-fire, we continue to work with them. That's reconciliation. We talk to them. We work with them each and every day.

(Inaudible) -- part of Marne Dauntless there is a sheikh that John Kolasheski is working with each and every day, and it's part of operation of Marne Dauntless to bring in more capacity into Jisr Diyala. I hope that answers your question.

We still see the same three, but just at a minimal. And they're not -- they're -- and they're not as strong and synchronized as they were 15 months ago.

Q Great. Thanks very much. And welcome home in a couple weeks.

COL. GRIGSBY: Thank you. Can't wait.

MR. HOLT: All right.

Greg?

Q Yes. Colonel, when are you actually redeploying? And also, could you speak a bit about what exactly -- what -- which factors you would say most led to the success? Was it the living -- changing your location, living amongst the populace, or was it the more aggressive operations against the supply lines, if you will?

COL. GRIGSBY: That's a great question. And I'll be -- we should -- we're doing a TOA ceremony here with the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, on the 15th, and then I should be heading home sometime after that. Of course, as a leader, I'm the last one, you know, last one to come out of here and get all my soldiers home safely first.

But the second point of your question -- I could talk about that for days. I mean, the real reason why we did so well out here? Because we conducted

full-spectrum COIN operations against the enemy. We followed doctrine. I mean, the great manual that General Petraeus authored and wrote when he was the three-star in -- at Leavenworth on COIN operations, we followed it. We did it. I mean, we went out there, and we lived with the people. We built relationships with the people.

When we first came in, we were going out and conduct kill-or- capture operations at night, and during the daytime, no kidding, just like I said, we were shaking hands and greeting people and building the trust. And I couldn't tell you which one is more important -- both of them, equally important.

You have to do all that simultaneously. Some people can sit there and say you got -- you do security then you start working towards that? No. It has to happen simultaneously, and you have to treat everybody with dignity and respect.

And frankly, the bad guys over here, they only know one thing. They know one thing, and it's that my foot upside their head -- it's soldiers going in there and killing or capturing them if they're really not reconcilable. That's what they know.

But once we -- once that's going on, at the same time, you have the trust going in with the local government and with the local people, and then you start building the capacity, you start building the governance, and frankly -- and when the Sons of Iraq were introduced, this is where we were able really to start getting after it, really getting after it. And if you don't mind -- I think I may have said this before, but the Sons of Iraq is really fighting COIN operations. It's really putting pressure on the extremists along all lines of operations.

For example, when we hire an SOI group in a town -- in the Madain qadha, you start paying them. Okay. So they're securing their neighborhood. That's a secure line of operation, pressure on the extremists. Then you pay them, you know, the \$240 a month. That brings money into their local neighborhoods. You're putting pressure on the extremists through the economic line of operations.

Then as they start to get more stuff in their neighborhoods, they want to be heard by their government. They build a local community council. Now you're putting pressure on the extremists through the governance line of operation.

We currently have 500 SOI. They're getting ready to go into the IPs, the local police. So now you're putting pressure on the extremists through the transition line of operation.

And because we have 7,000 Sons of Iraq in our Madain qadha with an average family of 10, I am now talking to 70,000 more people through the communication line of operation that's putting pressure on the extremists.

That's the way you do it. You follow doctrine, it works, and you can use it, and you modify off of it as you go into it. Hope that answers your question.

Q Absolutely. Thank you, Colonel.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

FbL?

Q Hi, Colonel. My question is, what -- could you give me kind of a path line of what you've seen in the development in ISF while you have been there? And what are -- what areas that you're most hoping to see growth in, in the future?

COL. GRIGSBY: Great. Great question. When I was here -- when I leave here -- I've spent 37 months in Iraq, so I've got a little bit of experience. When I was here in OIF 2, the Iraqi security forces were just starting from the very beginning. And I can tell you, being back here in OIF 5 and for 15 months, the Iraqi security forces are performing in an outstanding manner.

We have a national police brigade and an Iraqi army brigade in the Madain qadha. Two leaders, Brigadier General Ahmad (sp) and Brigadier General Abdullah, that are just -- no kidding, they are good leaders. They're nationalists. They -- they're looking for a good Iraq. One's Shi'a, one's Sunni, but they want a good Iraq. They're nationalists, and they're getting after it and they have a proper leadership. We also have the Marne Division's Warrior Leader Course, where we send soldiers down to Kalsu where they go through leader development training, and we keep on feeding that process.

So the national police and the Iraqi army brigade are continuing to get better, and they're out there doing operations on their own and then reporting back, back to us. So it's working very well. We also have about 900 Iraqi police in the Madain qadha, and we're continuing to work with them.

As a matter of fact, as Colonel Pat White comes in, I told him the one thing that you can focus on to take the Madain qadha continue to grow and get better is continue to focus on the Iraqi police; continue to partner with them, continue to work with them on community policing within the towns. We have seven IP police stations, but continue to work that piece. Because really that's what the people want to see; they want to see an Iraqi policeman on the corner when they walk to their house or walk their kids to school. But overall, I think the Iraqi security forces have improved dramatically, and they're really getting it.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

We had a couple of other folks join us here. Who else is on the line?

Q Jarred Fishman's on.

MR. HOLT: Okay, Jarred, go ahead.

Q Yes, sir. Thank you for all your efforts. Could you talk a little bit about -- you know, you mention the different tracks for a successful counterinsurgency. Talk a little bit about the efforts from the central government in Baghdad, not just the province, but the national government being able to work with the qadha government and the regional and the district level and the city-town-village government. Talk a little bit about if you've seen any progress and where the trouble spots would be on that.

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, all I can talk about, because I'm out here in the Madain qadha, is my qadha, and then, of course, because I'm part of the

Baghdad province and the Baghdad governorate, I work with the Baghdad governor, as well. And it's improving.

Out here in the Madain qadha, they already had a government that was established, because before we came out here, there was maybe one company coming across the river every other day. So they were surviving on their own. They were improving things on their own. So they had a government. They have a mayor, they have a director of a staff, and they have four nahiyas.

Where we've worked very hard with -- where we work very hard with our Madain government is getting it tied back to the Baghdad province, and that's what we continue to work with. And that's one of the things that I've talked to Colonel Pat White about. Another focus of his effort would be to continue to work with the Baghdad governor in getting DGs continuing to come out here to the Madain qadha, especially because the security is so much better, and then they can bring out their ideas, their resources and their money to come out here and improve things in the Madain qadha. And I think if the violence stays down as low as it is right now, we'll continue to do that.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Anybody -- somebody else joined us on there, online?

Q Yes. This is Richard Lowry from op-for.com.

MR. HOLT: Okay, Richard. Go ahead.

Q I don't really have a question for you, Colonel, but I'd like to congratulate you and all of your soldiers on a job well done in the last 15 months.

COL. GRIGSBY: Thank you. We appreciate it. And these soldiers are just America's blood and treasure. They're the best. They're just heroes. And they do it every day for their country.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

And who else is online with us?

Q It's just FbL clicking back in. I lost my connection. MR. HOLT: Okay. All right.

Any other follow-up questions?

Q Yeah, Colonel. Andrew Lubin from Military Observer. Sir, when I was traveling with General --

COL. GRIGSBY: Yeah.

Q -- (name inaudible) -- a couple of months ago, he was telling me that he was the largest employer in the area, with the CLCs and all. Can you talk to us how your PRTs are doing and how they are (spinning up ?) the private sector jobs?

COL. GRIGSBY: Oh, that was great. That's a great question. When we first got here, we did not have any PRT, so I used my deputy commander and basically built one, and we call it military PRT, using our staff officers. But about six months ago, we did -- no kidding, we got an EPRT. Mr. Dick Hawkins is the State Department rep, and we also got a USAID rep. We got a Department of

Agriculture rep and we also got some BBAs that are out here working with us. And it's doing well.

Just two weeks ago, our EPRT put on a farmers' coop in Wahida because 70 percent of our job production out here is agriculture. So they put on a farmers' coop, which we had over 1,500 Iraqis, farmers, coming into this coop, listening to the minister of Agriculture, minister of Water, and also learning new techniques for farming. It was just tremendous. We could not have done that a year ago. We couldn't have done it because I didn't have the expertise, but we couldn't have done it without the EPRT and where the security is a lot better. And he has a close relationship with the qadha mayor, and he is the lead guy now on bringing the capacity of government and economics into the Madain qadha. So it's working well.

Q       Excellent. Thank you.

Q       I've got a follow-up, sir. You mentioned the 500 SOI who are going to be enrolled in the IP. Are they going to be trained at Camp Fiji? Or is there a new training center which is going up for the Madain qadha?

How are they going to be brought into the police?

COL. GRIGSBY: Of course they'll be hired locally. And then they'll go into training, get trained after they get the hiring orders. And then they'll come back and serve locally in the Madain qadha. That's what I --Brigadier General Adnan is the Madain qadha police chief, and that's what we worked on. But that's very important.

But, you know, they don't want to go in, get trained and be shipped off to Samarra or somewhere else, because these Sons of Iraq are right now guarding their neighborhoods and they want to come back and work within their neighborhoods, since that's where their family is. So that's the agreement that we've had with the Madain qadha police chief.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Any other follow-up questions?

Q       If I could -- FbL again.

MR. HOLT: Yeah.

Q       Colonel, my apologies about being disconnected. I didn't hear your answer, but I will go back and check the transcript. You mentioned, though, that holds on -- the holds and the gains are tenuous, holding on's kind of tenuous. And if you could, explain a little bit why and what factors are of concern. What's going to be the biggest issue for your replacements, do you believe?

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, the reason why it's tenuous is because there still is extremists here in Iraq. And there still are extremists here in the Madain qadha, and we can never drop our guard. And we've got to continue very aggressively to go after the extremists, those that are left. And that's what we will continue to do.

But the one piece that I'd hand off to Colonel Pat White, to take advantage -- to take advantage of the window that we have right here, because we have a window of opportunity because of the way we have fought and because of the Sons of Iraq, and to continue to work on the relationship between the Madain



qadha and the Baghdad governance, because right now we're not talking security. We're talking capacity. And capacity can truly go to the next level if you get the Baghdad governor, the DGs and its ministers to come out to the Madain qadha, come across the Rustamiyah bridge. You know, the world does not come to an end after the Rustamiyah bridge. The Madain qadha, 1.2 million people -- the violence has gone down. And there's a lot of things -- a brick factory -- for example, we have a brick factory out here that hired 15,000 Iraqis.

I mean, we've made those gains. So there's a lot of opportunity out here, for the Baghdad governorate to bring out its resources and its money, to come out here and make things better.

And once you get the Baghdad governorate now paying for the majority of the improvements out here, you're starting to work towards some really good momentum there. And that's the one thing, if you go to the window of opportunity I've given Pat White, you go do that, and you're going to take the Madain qadha to the next level.

Q Thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right. Anything else, anyone else.

COL. GRIGSBY: Thank you.

(Cross talk.)

Q Yeah, Colonel, I have one. Andrew Lubin again.

Colonel, you've got 30 to 50 bad guys maybe overall, you know, 30 Sunnis and, you know, half-a-dozen -- a bunch of the other guys.

With the 1.2 million people and Colonel White coming in, have these bad guys been marginalized? Or have they, are they, do they have a more ordinate effect than 30 people in a big area should?

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, my personal opinion on fighting this, I think they've been marginalized. They've been disrupted. They're not synchronized, no way. There is no way.

And we've just got to continue to grow on that; continue to thicken the line of security, so they don't have an opportunity to pop their head up. But every once in a while, and that's why our soldiers, you know, that's why you can never forget what an Army brigade is built to do.

An Army brigade is built, an infantry brigade is built, to kill or capture bad people. And we can never drop our guard, because they may get lucky one day, out of 365 or out of a month. So we always got to keep our dukes up, as Marne 6 always tells us, to be ready.

But in the Madain qadha, I think they have been disrupted. The Sunni extremists, the Shi'a extremists have definitely been disrupted. They cannot do business as normal in here. And we've killed or captured a bunch of them.

Q Do you know who you are? Do you know who they are?

I mean, just as I've seen with the Sons of Iraq, can you go out there and -- I mean, that's more of a police -- aren't we getting to a point now where this is more police work than heavy brigade work?

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, I'll tell you what, you know, because we have the Sons of Iraq securing key infrastructure and securing the neighborhood, because we have two brigades of Iraqi security forces, and we could use more out here, but there's always priorities. Baghdad's a priority right now.

And the because of if we do get increased IPs, what we're -- by doing that, you are building the structure that if they try, they cannot possibly build the resources or build the logistics to do anything.

And let me just give you -- you know, this is a great question. Let me give you an example what happens. When Muqtada al-Sadr a couple weeks ago, about a month ago, raised his head and said, you know, for some violence -- Jisr Diyala is a Shi'a town that's tied right across the river back into Baghdad, about seven kilometers from Sadr City.

He had a little bit of violence in Jisr Diyala. But because of the Sons of Iraq, because of the IPs, because of the 3-1 national police Iraqi brigade, we put that down immediately, and then the next day the people of Jisr Diyala were having a march in support of the government of Iraq. And that's because we have the structure now to -- if that happens, we can -- we absorb, but it won't be out of control, because we have the structure around it that will quickly take it down.

I hope that answers your question.

Q Yes, great.

MR. HOLT: Yeah.

Q So this is turning into an all -- into an Iraqi show, which is the goal. This is tremendous.

COL. GRIGSBY: Absolutely.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And --

COL. GRIGSBY: And it's -- so I mean, we still got some -- you know, there's always going to be some issue out here, because there just is. That's the business of being in the Madain qadha.

But we have the structure in place where we can start hanging a lot of stuff on it, and not just security, because going back to COIN doctrine, not just security, it's really capacity building right now.

Q One final question. You had mentioned Colonel White's BCT. When they come in to backfill your positions, will it be like a hundred percent coverage of what we have today, so there won't really be a drawdown in U.S. forces for the foreseeable future?

COL. GRIGSBY: In the Madain qadha, with Colonel White, yes, it is basically a one-for-one relief in place. You know, he's got his key personnel and has the same -- about the same amount of capabilities and techniques that I've used. And I've been talking to him for about six months. So we've been

talking to each other. We've done VTCs. We've shared intel. He went through a training rotation that I sent guys to, to help him with. And now he's here right now. And matter of fact, today -- right now, today is the day where I step out of the driver's seat, and he steps in the driver's seat, and then I step back and watch him and give him advice as he takes it on, until the TOA ceremony next Thursday. And this is a 10- to 12-day relief in place model that we use at my level, at the battalion level, at the company level, at the platoon level and the squad level.

So it's a very deliberate handoff. And he has the same capability that I have out here in the Madain qadha. And by the way, we were the only surge brigades to get replaced.

That tells you a couple of things. It tells you that the Hammer has done a pretty damn good job, but also that the Madain qadha is some key terrain; that he who owns it controls an entrance into Baghdad -- very important.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Thank you very much.

And we're about out of time here, sir. Do you have any final comments or closing thoughts for us?

COL. GRIGSBY: My only final comments as I close out is, the 29 soldiers that we've lost, in combat, and the 162 that have been wounded. And they will live in my heart forever. And I'm the only one. I hold myself responsible for their deaths because as the commander, you make decisions.

But those soldiers did not die in vain. And my condolences and sympathies will always go to their family members. And if they ever need anything, as long as I'm on their turf, and they give me a call, I won't -- I'll stop what I'm doing to go help them out. Because they are the true heroes.

They gave more. They gave the ultimate sacrifice, for their country and for the freedom of the greatest country in the world, the United States of America. And I'll just always be with them.

And you know what? Just going back to the soldiers that are redeploying right now, it's all about them. They're America's treasure.

They're the ones that go in the middle of the night, at zero-two in the morning, and go into a door and go into harm's way. They're the ones that go to a memorial service, then the next morning put on their gear to go back out and do a combat patrol for their country.

So they're just amazing. And our Army is the best army in the world. And I thank you guys for what you do in getting the word out as well.

MR. HOLT: Thank you very much, sir. We do appreciate you being with us today. And your previous reports have been invaluable for us here. Thank you very much, Colonel Wayne Grigsby, the commander of 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Multinational Division Central.

And sir, we look forward to hopefully following up with Colonel White here in a few months. But thank you very much sir.

COL. GRIGSBY: You got it. Thank you, sir. You guys take care.

END.